Amendments to the Specification:

Please amend the paragraph beginning on page 1, at line 12 with the following:

Currently, a datagram-based communications protocol known as the Simple Network Management Protocol ("SNMP"), is implemented to perform network management of vendor telecommunications equipment over long distances across local area networks (LANs) and wide area networks (WANs). For example, in the system 10 as shown in FIG. 1, many vendors 12 of a telecommunications carrier 15 (e.g., MCIWorldcom, ~~assignee of the present invention~~) rely on SNMP communications to manage their equipment across a LAN/WAN 20. Thus, a piece of equipment 13 may generate a message about its operational state and this message may be communicated via SNMP from the equipment to MCIWorldcom's network management software 16 across the network. In another example implementation, a network operation, administrator or maintenance center, e.g., located in North Carolina, may be required to provision switches remotely located across the country, e.g., in Texas, via a WAN.